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ABSTRACT

This report contains the recommendations made by Minnesota's Task Force on Education for Employment, which was established in 1986 to evaluate how well that state's K-12 educational system is preparing all students for work and whether students have equal access to work-related learning experiences. The following recommendations are made: (1) the mission of Minnesota's pre-K-12 system should include the goal of preparing all graduates with the appropriate skills, information, experience, and attitudes to pursue productive work lives; (2) those who share responsibility for achieving the goal of work-ready graduates are pre-K-12 educators, students, families, business, industry, labor professionals, educational and social service agencies, postsecondary educators, and other citizens; (3) the state board of education will define and evaluate specific statewide work-readiness learner outcomes in every curricular area; (4) every local school district should ensure work-readiness learner outcomes through an integrated pre-K-12 curriculum; (5) state and local school districts should ensure a relevant and accessible process of development for administrators, teachers, and support staff; and (6) state and local systems should restructure educational delivery systems to ensure that an environment that guarantees work-ready students will be created. A rationale and description of concomitant responsibilities for each recommendation is included. A 64-item bibliography concludes the document. (CML)

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WORK *Readiness*

REPORT OF THE
COMMISSIONER'S TASK FORCE
ON EDUCATION
FOR EMPLOYMENT



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*A new promise
in Minnesota's
education*

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**WORK READINESS:
A
New
Promise
in Minnesota's
Education**

Report of the
Commissioner's Task Force
on Education
for Employment

1988

Preface

The Minnesota Task Force on Education for Employment was established in 1986. Those of us who have been involved in its investigations and deliberations over these many months welcome the chance to share with you our recommendations for a new promise in Minnesota's education.

The Task Force has had a special opportunity to identify and consider what it is that will open up a brighter and better and more productive future for our students. We have had a chance to see that our students will need more from their preprimary, primary, and secondary education. We share a commitment to work-preparedness, or work-readiness, as the educational key to the future success of our citizens, our workforce, our businesses, and our entire economy.

If we expect our young people to succeed in their own lives, then we must teach them throughout their learning years what it takes to succeed. We must instill in them an understanding of the values, skills, and attitudes that will help them develop to their fullest potential—whatever that individual potential may be. New learning and new teaching for work-readiness must go hand-in-hand with the educational experiences students now receive.

The unshakable conclusion reached by the Task Force is that work-readiness is a critical teaching element that must take root in the pre-K-12 educational curriculum as integrated, experience-based learning. This is the new promise we feel that the Minnesota education system must now make to its young people.

January 1988
St. Paul, MN

Foreword

This is an exciting time to be in Minnesota's education system. Teachers, school boards, administrators, and state legislators are on the threshold of a new era in education. If Minnesota takes up the present challenge, our state can accomplish a significant transformation in the learning outcomes for all children in pre-kindergarten through grade 12.

The world we know today is a far cry from the world our parents entered when and if they graduated from high school. Theirs was a world of industrial mastery, of conformity, of jobs. Work was a job, usually repetitive. Few believed that they could be personally fulfilled in their work.

In the space of a generation, we have seen enormous changes occur in both the nature of work and in the feelings people have about their work. Our world is one of individual uniqueness, of high achievement, of possibilities our parents never dreamed about. We are right now better informed about who we are than any society has ever been. We have learned that we live in a global economy, in a world community. And, most importantly, we have learned that change is inevitable.

Can we begin to imagine the world our children will enter? They will have to deal with issues and problems we cannot begin to anticipate. They will work in fields we do not know exist, and they will face dynamic competition. Will they be prepared? Who will prepare them?

Indeed, the Minnesota education system must accept this challenge and begin to look at how its young people can be better prepared for the world they will enter and shape. We must give them the values and skills they need. We must teach them how to be able to learn new skills as technology changes their world. We must show them how to be work-ready.

We are fortunate to have an opportunity to read and discuss this report of the Minnesota Task Force on Education for Employment. A caring and knowledgeable group of Minnesota citizens spent eight months considering the vital issues surrounding work-readiness for our young people. This is their report. We must heed its basic premise.

December 21, 1987

Dr. Ruth E. Randall
Commissioner of Education
State of Minnesota

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INTRODUCTION

Minnesota is a state known for one of the best pre-K-12 educational systems in the nation. Much time, energy, and commitment have been given to achieve quality education. Historically, Minnesota's educational system has been responsive to the needs of its citizens. As a result of the space race during the late 1950's and 1960's, schools responded to the need for more scientists and mathematicians. As a result of the civil rights movement in the 1960's, schools acted on issues of equity including desegregation, integration, and sex bias. As a result of concern for the needs of special populations, schools focused attention on handicapped and disadvantaged persons. Schools have also responded to social needs by developing new curricula for drug prevention, chemical abuse, and early childhood education.

Now a new need has emerged: Pressing public policy issues have challenged the schools' ability to educate all students for future learning and work in a changing global society.

Current reform efforts call for "excellence in education." Most commonly the pursuit of "excellence in education" is defined in terms of preparation for college. To meet the new challenge, excellence must be thought of in broader terms. Reform initiatives that focus only on efforts to achieve excellence in preparing pre-K-12 students for four-year professional training are no longer adequate. Greater emphasis and resources should be devoted to initiatives to prepare *all* students for their futures in an interdependent technological society. Each student in the public school system should learn how to learn and set priorities; to appreciate the value of work and the value of cooperation, as well as the value of competition; and to accomplish responsible decision-making.

Young people need these skills to reach their full potential. Schools must provide the setting for more equitable opportunities to prepare students for future work.

Without a capable workforce in Minnesota, economic development activities designed by local and state groups will be futile. The young people currently being educated in elementary

and secondary schools will impact significantly on the future performance of business, industry, the family, and other institutions in society. They must be prepared.

The Task Force on Education for Employment would like to recognize and support current efforts to facilitate change in the elementary and secondary educational system. The Task Force supports the Minnesota Department of Education's efforts to move to learner outcomes and school-based management. It encourages the State Board of Education's review and update of core curriculum program offerings and graduation requirements. Task Force members recognize that local teachers and other education staff try to integrate content and students' everyday experiences and to focus on personalized learning and that teachers have made efforts to update their professional knowledge and skills. The Task Force commends teachers who are dedicated to achieving quality in their own performance as well as the performance of their students.

In addition to the role teachers play in nurturing quality education in Minnesota, many families take an active role in their children's education. Many families recognize education as a top priority for their children. The general public is aware that education makes an important contribution toward fostering the well-being of the society and the economy.

Despite these commendable efforts, the Task Force feels that the school community has not adequately addressed one of the important goals of the education system—the preparation of all students for work.

The Task Force members recognize that attitudes and skills needed for work are developed through influences from the family, school, and community as the child continues to grow and develop. Parents and families are primarily responsible for learning in infancy and early childhood, and they remain managers of the child's learning through grade 12.

The Task Force is suggesting that parts of the education system interfere with the empowering of families and teachers to

take a proactive role in the learning process. Such problematic parts as rigid seat-time requirements, separation by discipline of curriculum planning and implementation processes, top-down management structures, teachers doing nonprofessional work, overloaded counselors, inappropriate attitudes about the value of educators, lack of concern about ongoing developmental needs of educators, and lack of meaningful family involvement are examples of systemic areas that the Task Force has identified.

Recommendations in this report are designed to focus on the need for *all* students to be work-ready and the need for *all* teachers to be teachers of work-readiness. The task of education is multifaceted; work-readiness is seen as part of the mission of the pre-K-12 system.

The Task Force is recommending that educators give high priority to the development of attitudes and skills that contribute toward making a student work-ready. The Task Force is not suggesting that educators simply add new work-readiness subject matter to the curriculum or put a new face on vocational education. Rather, they are suggesting that work-readiness needs to become valued by, and a goal of, the entire education system and everyone connected with it. The teaching style of teachers must change from being the provider of information to being the provider of methods of delivery that acknowledge the individual learning style and needs of students. The goal of work-readiness must be incorporated into each educator's thinking. Teachers will need to commit to and undertake professional responsibility for work-readiness and reflect on their role in achieving it.

Work-readiness describes a state of being in which a person is competent to engage in work activities and has acquired an attitude that appreciates the value of work for one's own personal benefits and for those of the larger society. All education, whether preparing students to enter college or to enter the job market immediately after graduation, is to be considered education for work. High school trigonometry learned by a college-bound

prospective electrical engineer is as much preparation for work as office skills leading to employment as a secretary immediately after high school graduation. Teachers need to help students make connections so that young people learn some potential component of work-readiness in all courses.

The first-grade teacher introducing a new reading text might use that opportunity to help students think about the book as something that provides different kinds of work for many people: writers, editors, illustrators, printers, shipping workers, bookstore clerks, librarians, etc. Given the increasing wide array of career choices, educators need to start as soon as possible to explore and explain the world of work with their students.

The Task Force distinguishes between "work" and "employment." Work is a purposeful activity which requires effort and which is productive in terms of economic, social, and/or personal value to individuals, institutions, and/or society. Schooling is the work of the student. Other forms of work include employment, entrepreneurship, volunteering, and homemaking. Employment is defined in economic terms as paid work at which someone is employed. Employment is recognized as only one form of work. Other terms used in this report are defined in Appendix A.

The Task Force assumes that a change is required in thinking about what constitutes preparation for work. Also, educators need to continue to identify and resolve problems within the educational structure that limit implementation of work-readiness in all program areas and at all grade levels, prekindergarten through 12. Educators need to become accountable for fostering the development and evaluation of work-readiness learner outcomes. Evaluation should not simply focus on those things that are traditionally easily evaluated. Rather, evaluation should focus on what the society defines as work-readiness. What should the work-ready person be able to do? What are the expectations that industry, government, the family, and other institutions have

regarding participation in work? When evaluating for work-readiness, ask, "Is the array of activities available through the pre-K-12 system allowing students to become fully enfranchised so that they may actively participate in the economy and the society?" New concepts and procedures for evaluation will be required.

In order to facilitate local change efforts, there is a need to develop community-wide value for and support of education. This outreach would include empowering educators and families to accept their responsibility to foster the maximum development of each learner. Policy decisions, developed by school boards, the community, and educators, generally describe what is expected of the educational system. Implementation decisions should be assigned to the professional educator.

This Task Force report addresses the need for leadership by local teachers and administrators, as well as the State Board of Education and the Minnesota Department of Education, in order to achieve necessary changes in the system. The Task Force believes that change occurs at the local level in classrooms between teachers and students. Resources must be available to foster the ongoing development of teachers; up-to-date content and accessible methods must be available to foster student learning. However, other groups have the responsibility to encourage change and create an environment where work-readiness skills that benefit both the learner and the society are acknowledged and rewarded.

The Task Force has had a number of constraints in dealing with the three charges: limited time (eight months, eight meetings); complexity of the charges; and resources available to do its work. Therefore, this report focuses on six recommendations for changes instead of on an implementation plan. The Task Force believes that explicit implementation strategies (Phase II) are the responsibility of the many interest groups involved. This report outlines general areas of responsibility as suggestions for assuring that implementation proceeds, and Appendix B clearly shows these areas. In the presentation of all six recommendations, responsibilities are detailed. In the responsibilities sections, the first-

listed group is the primary implementation source, and consideration is given to sequencing activities according to which ones must be begun before others can be started. It becomes clear that many responsibilities are interactive, and so precise sequenced timelines do not exist.

The Task Force appreciates the direction provided by the Commissioner of Education, Ruth E. Randall. Her leadership has fostered many of the reform efforts that the Task Force supports and reinforces. The Task Force recognizes that the Commissioner will be responsible for evaluation and implementation of recommendations. Given the time devoted, as well as interest in and commitment to the recommendations which they have proposed, Task Force members request reconvening the group in November of 1988 to assess implementation strategies undertaken to assure that Minnesota students will receive work-readiness education.

A final note: This report synthesizes the ideas, opinions, research, wisdom, and unconstrained debate of many people who care deeply about how Minnesota schools can prepare young people for a real world. In the spirit of creating new approaches to a newly defined educational opportunity, the Task Force freely roamed through volumes of material, and reviewed and absorbed much of what colleagues provided through arduous investigation. To those who already see the challenge, thank you. To those who have yet to explore it, please read this report and become involved.

THE THREE CHARGES

- I. To assess and evaluate the commitment of the K-12 education system in preparing students for future careers and employment.
- II. To examine the extent that the K-12 education system responds to the needs of business, industry, and society in the preparation of students for work.
- III. To examine if Minnesota students have equal access to appropriate learning experiences that would lead to vocational preparation.

In 1986, the Minnesota Commissioner of Education established a Task Force on Education for Employment.

Members of the Task Force received these three charges at their first meeting. It was left to the Task Force to consider the charges, reformulate them if necessary, and create the framework from which to map out a major opportunity and challenge for the education system in this state.

This section describes the three charges and presents the interpretations agreed on by members of the Task Force.

Charge I: To assess the commitment of the K-12 education system in preparing students for future careers and employment.

The Task Force discussions determined that this charge should assess the commitment of *preparation for work*, rather than for future careers and employment. Preparation for work has been defined in terms of development of work-readiness outcomes.

As reported by employers, work-readiness skills include both the traditional basic skills of communications literacy and problem-solving, and the newer skills of environmental, technological, and occupational literacy. Work-readiness also includes personal attitudes and behaviors such as self-discipline and creativity, as well as the ability to effect and cope with change, to acquire and apply

new knowledge, to be an active citizen, to understand vocational opportunities, and to possess specific work skills.

Although most high school students begin working before they graduate, and all students work at some time after they graduate, the pre-K-12 educational system has tended to distance itself from accountability for student achievement of work-readiness learner outcomes. Some of the work-readiness skills have been addressed through the secondary vocational education curriculum, but historically, vocational education has been for students who do not intend to pursue higher education. Resources to support secondary vocational preparation have consistently dwindled for over a decade. In some school districts, only a few vocational staff remain.

In 1976-77, Minnesota legislative funding for vocational education supported 50 percent of salaries, travel, equipment, and supplies; there were 269 local school districts participating in 59 vocational centers. Ten years later, in 1986-87, funding was prorated to 39 percent of salaries and travel, with none for supplies; a local equipment "levy" was allowed, and the number of local school districts cooperating to provide vocational education was 188, with just 38 vocational centers operating.

Declining legislative commitment in Minnesota has resulted in fewer and fewer operating vocational centers. The picture (at this writing) for 1988-89 appears to be gloomy, with less than half the previous level of funding projected. If the correlation noted for over a decade holds, then the number of vocational centers will again decline.

Vocational education programs have been the subject of much study. Throughout the state, vocational education has been treated as a separate function. There is general confusion about the mission of vocational education in the pre-K-12 system. Clearly, preparing students for future careers and employment ought to be an integral part of the vocational education agenda, which, in turn,

needs to interact and collaborate more substantively with programs throughout the entire pre-K-12 curriculum.

The full range of work-readiness skills should be addressed and integrated throughout the pre-K-12 curriculum. Strategies for staff development, curriculum development, and evaluation need to be implemented to assure that commitment to this purpose is actively pursued. School counselors need to guide and promote the career development of all students, not just those planning postsecondary education. Every program area in the curriculum, including vocational education, needs to be seen and appreciated as an important and integral part of the overall education system for the purpose of delivering on this commitment.

Simply tinkering with the current pre-K-12 system will not be enough. To fully meet the needs of students in preparation for future careers and employment, major restructuring to create an integrated pre-K-12 system is necessary.

Charge II: To examine the extent that the K-12 education system responds to the needs of business, industry, and society in the preparation of students for work.

Business has strongly and consistently made it clear that staying competitive requires that they always be on the leading edge, creating new markets, inventing new materials and energy sources, designing new products, coming up with new manufacturing processes, creating new services—in other words, constantly innovating.

But it isn't business that does these things; it's people: employees, laborers, managers, technicians, etc. Students in the pre-K-12 system today must become these people tomorrow.

Most pre-K-12 educators are relatively detached from the needs of business and industry and society. Except through the use of advisory committees and the work experience requirements of vocational education, little attention is paid to interaction with the workplace. In general, pre-K-12 education is thought of as basic,

general, and/or college preparatory, and thereby cut off from labor, business, industrial, and economic concerns in any regular and ongoing way.

The Minnesota economy is dependent upon hard-working, well-educated, and productive workers. As jobs change more and more rapidly, people will have to learn newer skills. The most fundamental skill every student must have when leaving the pre-K-12 system is the ability and the desire to learn. Learning outcomes must fit the needs of business and society, and close partnerships of business/industry/society and education will help determine these outcomes. Students will need to be better prepared for the changing nature of work.

WHAT BUSINESS HAS BEEN SAYING:

- *The Panel on Secondary School Education for the Changing Workplace reported that large numbers of young people graduate from high school lacking the basic educational skills that are essential to successful participation in the workforce.*
- *The Committee on Economic Development, whose trustees are the nation's business leaders, warned: "Too many students lack reading, writing, and mathematical skills, positive attitudes toward work, and appropriate behavior on the job. Nor have they learned how to learn, how to solve problems, make decisions, or set priorities."*
- *A Wall Street Journal article in 1987 headlined "A Shallow Labor Pool Spurs Businesses to Act to Bolster Education . . . They Twist Legislators' Arms, Give Students Incentives to Get Them Up to Snuff."*

Studies by business organizations, such as the Minnesota Business Partnership and the National Alliance of Business,

confirm that little attention is now paid to the role of the school in shaping/designing the future role and content of work. Although educating young people for participation in society has been a goal of the social studies curriculum, the Task Force urges that cooperation be extended among schools, community, business, government, and social agencies to help students more thoroughly understand career development and active participation in society. Students need to acquire knowledge and problem-solving skills that will help them make the transition from school to work and take an active role in shaping society.

Employment that today offers students part-time monetary incentives tends to distract them from the important work of schooling. Quick, easy, low wages do not, in the long run, help students prepare for their future world of work. Schooling should be the top priority for students. Parents, business, and the community must do a better job of supporting the value of pre-K-12 education and the role of schooling in each student's life.

Charge III: To examine if Minnesota students have equal access to appropriate learning experiences that would lead to vocational preparation.

The question of equal access to learning experiences is a complicated one. Equal access differs in meaning and practice for just about every student. Truly equal access means the unblocking of whatever an individual's own barriers are—self-made, socially imposed, economically directed, genetically endowed, etc.—to fulfill individual potential. Thus, the broad objective of equal access is to enable each student the greatest opportunity for growth and self-fulfillment. Then each student can begin to prepare for a productive life defined in the most relevant terms for his/her unique situation.

The pre-K-12 system, along with families and communities, must create better ways to discover each student's unique barriers,

then unblock them by educational and other means. At the present time, the system falls very short of the mark, despite the willingness and dedication and good intentions of many.

The Task Force defines vocational preparation as work-readiness. Assuming that students' barriers can become unblocked, institutional barriers make the system unable to provide a truly democratic form of equal access to work-readiness. Various Task Force inputs identified several such institutional barriers: unevenly divided resources; State Board of Education rules and regulations; postsecondary entrance requirements; early education "labels" compartmentalizing students; subsidies favoring postsecondary education rather than work internships or transitions; and lack of vocational counseling. True, all students benefit from some policies and practices and learning experiences, but on the whole, the pre-K-12 system is not democratic or equitable on the issue of vocational preparation.

Educators across the state agreed that opportunities are not equal statewide, or even among schools within the same district. Schools generally lack a commitment to the goal of vocational preparation as a responsibility for each curriculum area. And, despite the existence of a vocational education curriculum, access for most students who plan to go on to postsecondary education is limited due to scheduling conflicts or facility capacity.

Some studies assert that secondary vocational programs have not met the needs and expectations of business and the community. With the large numbers of Minnesota youth who are at work one year after high school—more than 55 percent for over a decade—and the significant percentage of youth who are unemployed or unemployable one year after high school—12.2 percent from the Minnesota high school class of 1986—surely it is time to put some creative energy into thinking about the purpose, role, and delivery methods of vocational education so that work-readiness outcomes are more achievable.

Because so many policies bring unintended consequences to

learners, they should be reevaluated. More cooperative programs and individualized student planning are needed. Elementary and secondary school counselors have been too heavily burdened with nonessential tasks, which are inappropriate. These vocational and academic counselors need to have enough time to help students begin planning for work and developing the attitudes and skills needed to make transitions from school to work, whether that transition occurs immediately upon leaving high school or after a postsecondary education.

Until the pre-K-12 education system is restructured to appropriately accommodate equal access to learning experiences leading to work-readiness, young people will not achieve the vocational preparation they need and deserve.

Activities One Year After High School in Minnesota (%)

Activities	Class of						
	1975	1977	1979	1981	1983	1985	1986
A. 4-year college or university	27.1	30.9	30.7	32.6	35.0	39.6	45.4
Community college	9.5	7.0	8.3	9.0	10.2	10.6	10.0
Technical institutes	12.8	13.5	14.0	15.3	12.4	12.4	10.7
B. Paid employment only	34.5	35.3	34.3	28.5	29.7	25.2	23.1
Paid employment part-time plus school	26.6	27.4	28.4	28.9	32.7	32.3	32.5
Total	61.1	62.7	62.7	57.4	62.4	57.5	55.6
C. Unemployment only	3.8	2.9	3.0	4.8	3.2	2.7	2.3
Unemployment part-time plus school	5.3	5.4	6.5	8.5	9.6	9.5	9.9
Total	9.1	8.3	9.5	13.3	12.8	12.2	12.2

RECOMMENDATION O ■ N ■ E

REVIEW AND UPDATE MISSION

The legislative and State Board of Education mission for pre-K-12 education in Minnesota should be reviewed and updated to include the following:

Graduates from Minnesota's pre-K-12 educational system will be work-ready, in that they will have the appropriate skills, information, experience, and attitudes to pursue productive work lives in a rapidly changing society/economy. All students will have diverse and equitable opportunities to acquire work-readiness skills and attitudes.

Rationale:

A well-trained workforce is a precondition for economic and social prosperity. To date, educational reform efforts have not adequately dealt with the role of the pre-K-12 system in addressing problems related to education for students' future work. About half of Minnesota's high school graduates go directly into the workplace after leaving high school. These young workers must be prepared to act in changing economic and social systems that are highly technological and international in character. Education for work should reflect these dimensions. Because jobs of the future are likely to be different from what people do today, work-readiness education should appropriately prepare students.

In the context of the changing technological and sociological nature of work and the changing structure of education (e.g., postsecondary options plans in Minnesota), the purpose and role of vocational education within the pre-K-12 system have become increasingly unclear. Vocational education should have an *important* role in the pre-K-12 system in educating for work-readiness. Vocational education can, because of its historical underpinnings, take a *leadership* role in clarifying and fostering the changes that need to take place so that the pre-K-12 educational system in Minnesota can assure work-readiness for its graduates.

Responsibilities:

- A. The *Legislature and the State Board of Education* should acknowledge the importance of education for work by providing both leadership and resources. State leadership should focus statewide attention on the importance of work-readiness through adoption of a revised mission statement. This commitment should become a state priority and should be supported by the financial resources needed for a long-term commitment.

- B. The *State Board*, in cooperation with education leaders and representatives of the larger community, should initiate a strategy for clarification of the purpose and role of all program areas in the pre-K-12 system. Once the purpose and role have been clarified, the *Minnesota Department of Education* should recommend appropriate structures, program configurations, and staffing patterns, along with adequate funding arrangements to implement the purpose. These strategies may vary according to school district and community needs and resources. However, all pre-K-12 curriculum should be thought about in relation to an experience-based, integrated model that prepares students for their future work.
- C. *Local school districts* should examine their offerings and requirements. *Districts* should assess the needs of their students and develop learning outcomes within integrated educational programs that prepare all students for work. Traditional barriers between academic and vocational should be eliminated. Follow-up studies of students, interaction with employers in the community, and involvement of parents and students can assist local educators in fulfilling their mission.
- D. The *State Board of Education* should reassess requirements for graduation and requirements for local school districts to ensure that all students have access to programs and experiences that prepare them for a variety of options. The *Minnesota Department of Education* and the *Higher Education Coordinating Board* and its member postsecondary educational systems should cooperatively provide leadership by establishing standards and providing technical assistance to local districts so that continuity of work-readiness education exists.
- E. *All educators* should be committed to sharing the pre-K-12 responsibilities and risks associated with improving students' work-readiness.

RECOMMENDATION T • W • O

SHARE RESPONSIBILITY TO EDUCATE FOR WORK

Although the pre-K-12 educational system is primarily responsible for achieving the goal of work-ready high school graduates, the task cannot be accomplished without strong support and involvement from key stakeholders. These stakeholders who must share the pre-K-12 responsibility for assuring work-readiness of students include students; families; pre-K-12 educators; public officials; business, industry and labor professions; educational and social service agencies; postsecondary educators; and citizens.

Rationale:

Increased and more creative types of support from those who share an interest in the outcomes of the pre-K-12 system will be needed to effectively educate students for work. Planning for learning experiences required to develop necessary work-readiness skills for *all* students is a collaborative responsibility. Involvement must include truly active participation. The perspectives of all interest groups should be represented when analyzing issues and formulating educational goals. By this means, all stakeholders will share in the successful meeting of their needs.

Responsibilities:

- A. Students should be encouraged through alternative programs provided by the pre-K-12 system to take increased responsibility for their education and to regard it as a high priority in their lives.
- B. Families, parents, and guardians should insist on schooling as a top priority for their pre-K-12 students. Parents should actively participate in the educational process and provide a supportive home environment for learning.
- C. Educators should focus on the development of the whole person by assuring experience-based learning opportunities that prepare students for work.
- D. Public officials should provide leadership and commit the resources necessary to change the pre-K-12 system to ensure that students are work-ready. They should assess and build compatible policy linkages between programs that focus on educating students for work and other developmental programs.
- E. The State Board of Education and the Minnesota Department of Education should collaborate to develop legislation necessary to implement a second phase of education for work initiatives.

- F. *Business, professions, and labor* should provide accurate information to help students with career planning, and supplement and assist educators in providing appropriate learning experiences. To avoid reinventing new structures, existing groups made up of labor, business, and industry should be invited to participate in facilitating student learning.
- G. *Educational and social service agencies* should coordinate efforts to help students access and benefit from available resources.
- H. *Postsecondary teacher education systems* should recognize the importance of the pre-K-12 system in preparation of students for work and should encourage the development of work-readiness teaching skills and attitudes by providing access to developmental opportunities.
- I. *Citizens* should provide adequate tax dollars and participate in planning to guarantee that the pre-K-12 system provides equality of opportunity and strives for educational excellence.

RECOMMENDATION T·H·R·E·E

DEFINE AND EVALUATE LEARNER OUTCOMES

The State Board of Education will define and evaluate specific statewide pre-K-12 work-readiness learner outcomes in every curricular area.

- A. Develop work-readiness learner outcomes, which should, at a minimum, include the following areas:
- Communications (reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening);
 - Thinking and problem-solving (responsible judgment);
 - Career development (career exploration, entrepreneurship, occupational skill development, goal setting, etc.);
 - Ethics (attention to things that are not materialistic: values, morals, spirituality);
 - Environmental, economic, and technological literacy;
 - Aesthetics (design, form, grace, beauty, taste);
 - Citizenship (community service, ability to effect and cope with change);
 - Personal attitudes and behaviors (self-discipline, creativity, good work habits, health and wellness, leadership, lifelong learning); and
 - Interpersonal relationships (cooperation, friendship, family roles).
- B. Develop a process for continuous local and statewide evaluation of work-readiness learner outcomes throughout the pre-K-12 system.

Rationale:

The future is in the hands of today's pre-K-12 students and, although no one knows what the future holds, what is known is that it will be very different. Because of the general importance of one's work to personal and social assessment of success, work-readiness should be a desired outcome for all students and should be recognized as such by students. Learning is

a developmental process that starts with ideas, concepts, and skills students have acquired. Students should be able to see the relevance of the pre-K-12 curriculum to their future goals. Whether they go on for further training or directly into the workforce, students should know how to use their pre-K-12 experiences to prepare for work.

Responsibilities:

- A. The *State Board of Education*, through the Minnesota Department of Education, should modify learner outcomes to include preparing students for work. State and local board members should recognize that learner outcomes can be acquired through a wide variety of curriculum offerings.
- B. The *Minnesota Department of Education* should develop models for evaluating student achievement of work-readiness outcomes and models for monitoring district compliance.
- C. *Local school districts*, assisted by state-developed models, should develop work-readiness learner outcomes for the pre-K-12 system. The pre-K-12 curriculum should be assessed to assure that all students have access to desired outcomes. Achievement of learner outcomes should be evaluated on an ongoing basis, using a variety of methods.
- D. A wide range of stakeholders should provide input into the development of learner outcomes. *Educators, curriculum advisory committees, and Planning, Evaluating, and Reporting (P.E.R.) committees* should seek input from *families, students, business, labor, and professional groups*.
- E. *Postsecondary educators* should define learner outcomes for future educators.

RECOMMENDATION F • O • U • R

DEVELOP INTEGRATED, EXPERIENCE-BASED PRE-K-12 CURRICULUM

Every local school district should assure work-readiness learner outcomes through an integrated, experiential pre-K-12 curriculum. This curriculum would include the following objectives:

- A. Build upon each student's strengths and maximize learning opportunities in all areas of human development.
- B. Provide flexibility at all levels of the educational system to treat students as individuals. Use instruction to meet each student's needs, as defined in a personalized learning plan.
- C. Assist young people to plan for proactive participation in a rapidly changing, competitive global economy.
- D. Beginning in early elementary years, assist students to understand major life/work issues and how they interrelate (education, job, marriage, children, work, divorce, moving, etc.).
- E. Promote a home/school/community environment in which school staff and students model and are rewarded for the behaviors that would be valued in the contemporary workplace (e.g., self-esteem, initiative and creativity, productivity, sense of humor, people skills, adaptability to change, risk-taking, technical competence, tolerance for ambiguity, cooperation, leadership, focus on mission, pursuit of goals, propensity for action, and responsibility).
- F. Stress the relationship between educational activities and the real world of students. For example, develop simulations at all age levels to promote understanding of the relationship between knowledge and practical applications.
- G. Relate all curriculum content to shaping and balancing life/work roles, to changes that are occurring in the family and in the workplace, and, when possible, to specific vocational options.
- H. Provide incentives to encourage school/business/community partnerships to integrate and increase resources supporting learning that accommodates individual needs, talents, and preparation for future work.
- I. Based on individual student needs, plan learning opportunities that include service/career/work opportunities (both in-school and out of school, paid and unpaid).
- J. Promote understanding that desired learning outcomes can be developed through all curriculum areas and through a variety of instructional approaches.
- K. Expand opportunities for community service and work experience as part of a work-readiness program.

Rationale:

In general, strategies for coordinating learning through the pre-K-12 system are not adequate. Appropriate learning environments must assure work-readiness for pre-K-12 students. Students must be able to keep their options open while pursuing educational goals. Education focused on work-readiness should be blended into and supported by a broadly based comprehensive school curriculum. All program areas within the pre-K-12 system have the potential to contribute to work-readiness learner outcomes. Some programs are more generally focused, while some are more specific. All students need basic communication and thinking skills, technological literacy, and the ability to deal with career changes. There is value in experiential hands-on learning to develop needed competencies. Development of personal qualities, such as honesty, reliability, perseverance, and cooperativeness, are essential to success in the workplace and should be included as part of curriculum planning. Discussions about what curriculum integration is and how it will manifest itself in practice will be a necessary part of the reconceptualizing process.

Responsibilities:

- A. *Local school districts* should provide an educational program designed to meet the needs of individual students. Curriculum development should stress the relationship to life/work roles and occupations, and it should provide service/career/work opportunities for students.
- B. *Educators* should study and modify the artificial barriers between program areas, i.e., the fragmentation of knowledge. New roles and responsibilities should be clarified and clearly communicated to all involved.

- C. School administrators, classroom teachers, and support staff should promote a classroom/school environment that respects schooling as the work of a student and rewards the behaviors valued in the workplace. School staff should work at improving communication among program areas.
- D. Educators must recognize the link between school and society for any real change to occur. Teachers need to continuously examine and eliminate class, gender, and race bias from the curriculum.
- E. Schools should develop partnerships with the community to better provide "real-life" experiences for students. Business, professions, and labor groups should offer their expertise and unique resources to assist students in the learning process.
- F. The Minnesota Department of Education should seek resources and fund grants that disseminate information about successful school/community partnerships, provide technical assistance, and offer incentives for cooperation and integration of curriculum. The Minnesota Department of Education should develop a mechanism so that all curriculum updating considers future trends of business, industry, the family, and a democratic society. State Department strategies should model the behaviors and goals they are attempting to foster.

RECOMMENDATION

F ■ I ■ V ■ E

IMPROVE THE ABILITY OF EDUCATORS

State and local systems should be redesigned to assure a process that is relevant, readily accessible, and able to improve the ability of administrators, teachers, and support staff to assure work-readiness of students. This process would include preservice and ongoing inservice staff development opportunities.

- A. Require preservice education for teachers, administrators, and support staff to increase understanding of and commitment to an integrated curriculum that will focus on teaching and evaluation necessary to assure mastery of defined work-readiness learner outcomes.
- B. Educate teachers and administrators to become more effective managers of the learning process, including modeling and rewarding desirable behaviors that exemplify the contemporary workplace.
- C. Require foundation coursework for all preservice teachers and administrators; such training should inform teachers about the world-of-work/career development within the rapidly changing social system.
- D. Design and adequately fund staff development that is readily available and capable of meeting the needs of teachers. Staff development activities should ensure professional growth so that all educators are up-to-date in subject matter and teaching practices for a rapidly changing workplace. Effective instruction must be more varied and exciting. Use should be made of instructional strategies that would improve students' skill performance, their ability to think critically and to make sound judgments.
- E. Develop interactive experiences between the education and business communities (e.g., summer or sabbatical placements, internships) which assure that educators use a wide variety of resources outside the school.
- F. Assure access for educators to appropriate guidance services that are fully current with the changing realities of the workplace and occupations, and allow adequate time and resources to provide needed counseling services. In some instances, the school staff may coordinate community resources to achieve needed services.

Rationale:

The change suggested in this report cannot be accomplished by adding new curriculum content. Rather, it is a change in priority and structure of current curriculum offerings.

Teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and all other support staff need to be better informed about the work world and the social and economic realities that influence it.

Those responsible for directing change efforts must consider both teacher preparation programs and ongoing developmental opportunities. Thus, all practicing teachers, counselors, administrators, and support staff must be provided developmental opportunities.

Responsibilities:

- A. The legislature should recognize the importance of ongoing staff development efforts and provide adequate funding for it.
- B. Teacher preparation programs and the Board of Teaching should ensure that preservice education programs include the coursework and experiences that will help educators prepare students for the workplace. They should also define learner outcomes for teacher preparation that assure teachers are prepared to effectively teach work-readiness.
- C. Local school districts, in cooperation with the community and postsecondary institutions, should design staff development efforts that 1) constantly improve instructional skills and update curriculum and materials, and 2) encourage interactive experiences among education, the family, and the business community.
- D. Educators should take immediate action to become involved in clarification of the mission and structural change issues, not only so that they are active in determining the outcome, but also to clarify their own developmental needs. Staff should initiate their own plan for continued professional growth within the context of the revised pre-K-12 mission. Local

administrators should help local instructors and staff complete individual professional development plans. Plans should be designed to assure that each staff person's developmental needs are met and that the local school district has the necessary resources for the developmental plan to be carried out. End of the year follow-up on performance would be imperative.

- E. *Postsecondary institutions and the Minnesota Department of Education* should cooperate to provide leadership for the research and development activities needed for effective teaching of work-readiness learner outcomes. They should cooperate to widely disseminate new research findings and provide technical assistance to local schools wishing to integrate new knowledge into their system. The local schools should be partners in formulating and conducting ongoing research activities.
- F. *College and university teachers and educators* and others responsible for providing professional development activities should consider the new needs of educators when developing workshops and courses. This would include the following: relevant content that bridges the gap between theory and practice, flexible scheduling to meet practicing teachers' needs, and content that specifically addresses the concept of an integrated experience-based curriculum. This curriculum should specify work-readiness learner outcomes designed to meet the needs of individual students as well as the current knowledge base in education. Multiple means of delivery (including cost-benefits of technology) should be explored.
- G. *Local school districts* should provide appropriate guidance services to all students to assist them in realistic planning for their future. *Counseling staff* should coordinate efforts within regions, as well as interact with *postsecondary institutions* and the *business community* and other services and programs so as to provide current information and guidance. *Students* should be assisted by *guidance staff* in making the transition from school to work.

- H. The *Minnesota Department of Education and the State Board of Education* should collaboratively serve as a clearinghouse for developmental activities offered throughout the state and region. Offerings should include university, college, and technical institute courses; business and industrial internship opportunities; programs offered by professional organizations; state department offerings; etc.
- I. All *Minnesota Department of Education staff* presently responsible for academic and vocational programming (e.g., mathematics, science, industrial technology, social studies, home economics, business, English) should explore ways in which they could work together in fostering the development of all teachers so that students are work-ready. *Minnesota Department staff* should offer staff development activities around the state that are practical, voluntary, inexpensive, and—where possible—they should model the educational practice they are trying to foster.

RECOMMENDATION S ■ I ■ X

CHANGE THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION

State and local systems will need to restructure educational delivery systems to assure that an environment is created which guarantees that students will be work-ready.

- A. Evaluate state and local school structures to identify the changes necessary to maximize the development of individual students.
- B. Foster cooperation and participation in creating a consensus among education, business, government, parents, and other interest groups in our society about how to best facilitate the schooling process.
- C. Develop an action plan that includes accountability, decentralization, flexibility, and improved access to work-readiness.
- D. Develop an agenda for public education which is guided by sound ethical and educational principles and community values, and which is set by the public and its representatives.
- E. Provide information and educational opportunities including work experience to promote student interest and choice so that young people are prepared for the transition from school to work.
- F. Provide the means to enable all individuals to access a quality educational system regardless of age or income, and to achieve competencies needed for work.
- G. Decentralize authority for education so that teachers can be empowered to use their professional capabilities in achieving learner outcomes to meet the needs of each student.
- H. Provide educational opportunities for sequential lifelong learning through coordination of the educational system—preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary.
- I. Encourage parents to establish rules and expectations that foster the student's increasing capacity to manage his/her own learning.
- J. Require every school district in the state to have relevant, rigorous, demanding curriculum opportunities for students going directly into the workforce, as well as for those who will immediately continue their schooling.

- K. Provide a variety of incentives for local schools to restructure the system (e.g., support pilot programs that demonstrate creative, effective restructuring).
- L. Encourage financial support from business and industry, higher education, and other community agencies to assure work-readiness.
- M. Conduct statewide follow-up studies of all students who have left the system and use that data to improve schooling.
- N. Restructure the school workplace to reflect sound management practices which increase staff and student productivity and which can also enhance learning in a school environment.
- O. Consider the needs of special populations in the development of a restructured system (e.g., at risk individuals, teen parents, pre-school/older students, dropouts, offenders, drug/alcohol abusers) to accommodate the needs of all students. This objective means the delivery system needs to be reconceptualized and additional supports provided so that work-readiness learner outcomes can be achieved.

Rationale:

Current delivery systems often do not create appropriate learning environments to assure that work-readiness is provided for all pre-K-12 students. In some school districts, strategies for coordinating learning through the pre-K-12 system are not adequate. There needs to be improved coordination and articulation within the pre-K-12 system and between the pre-K-12 and postsecondary systems. Families should also take a more active role in their children's pre-K-12 education. Participating in the formulation of goals for the school, initiating regular communication with educators, and encouraging ongoing efforts to foster the child's capacity to become self-reliant are particularly important roles for the family.

Many educational change efforts have failed because the political and ethical dimensions of schooling are ignored. Educational critics argue that the current school structure often reduces the educators' professional and moral responsibilities for learning because others decide what should be taught. Teachers must be prepared in ways that develop their abilities to exercise wise professional judgment, and then they must be allowed to make educational judgments. The nonstandardized nature of the educational situation makes it imperative that control reside in the hands of the professional. Members of the profession must define and enforce their own standards of practice.

Educational leadership is needed which is both sensitive to the ethical and political nature of schooling and which is committed to increasing the educators' professional and moral responsibility. Administration can provide leadership for change and primarily serve a support function for teaching and learning.

Responsibilities:

- A. Educators and the public should maintain a lively dialogue to discuss the future of pre-K-12 education. Their dialogue should include an examination of alternative delivery systems. The perspective of all interest groups should be represented when identifying and analyzing issues affecting change in pre-K-12 education. For example, the changing family and its unique interests and potential contributions to the development of individuals and society should be considered in formulating educational goals.
- B. Local districts should develop an action plan that 1) identifies the changes necessary to provide individual student learning, and 2) commits the necessary resources to accomplish change.
- C. In order to increase ownership and promote creative restructuring, the *Minnesota Department of Education* should encourage decentralized, local district decision-making. Likewise, local districts should decentralize authority by providing educators and individual schools more opportunity for input, decision-making, and accountability. The *Department of Education* should provide models for local districts and incentives to encourage pilot programs. The *Minnesota Department of Education* should provide activities that foster participation and cooperation among stakeholders.
- D. Local school districts, in cooperation with families, should develop programs to help parents become active partners in the education of their children. State-level cooperation among the *State Board of Education*; the parent, teacher, and student associations; and educator groups could help provide leadership by offering technical assistance and by identifying and supporting model programs.
- E. The *State Board of Education* should review all rules and regulations to assure they are contributing to the local schools' ability to foster work-readiness learner outcomes. Those that hinder progress toward achieving deserved learner outcomes should be changed or eliminated.
- F. Professional educational organizations should plan yearly activities that ensure group working meetings to foster reconceptualizing the pre-K-12 system to include integrated, experience-based learning that focuses on preparation for work.

APPENDIX A

DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

Career: A profession or occupation which one trains for and pursues. In today's society, individuals may have several careers during their work life.

Educators: Teachers, counselors, support staff, administrators, and others who directly support the learning process within the pre-K-12 system.

Employment: Something at which someone is employed. In this report, employment is defined in economic terms as paid work, and recognized as only one form of work.

Human Development: A continuous transformation that takes place when an individual interacts with environmental influences. It involves maturation from within the individual and is lifelong in nature.

Local Districts: The administration, local school board, teachers, support staff, and others in the local system that contribute in one way or another to student outcomes. "Local schools" are considered to include the ethical, political, and social setting of the school as well as the written and unwritten curriculum. All these characteristics need to be included to assure appropriate planning.

Occupation: Used in two senses. In the first sense, occupation labels the type of work activity one is doing. In the second sense, occupation is used to describe what occupies one's time.

Partnership: An association of two or more parties who join together in some activity, with each taking responsibility for achieving shared goals.

Policy Makers: Federal and state legislators; state and local boards of education; federal and state departments of education; and others who are in a position to formulate and implement policy decisions.

Work: A purposeful activity which requires effort and which is productive in terms of economic, social, and/or personal value to individuals, institutions, and/or society. Schooling is the work of the student. Other forms of work include employment, entrepreneurship, volunteering, and homemaking.

Work-readiness: A person who is work-ready is competent to engage in work activities, and has acquired an attitude which appreciates the value of work for one's own personal benefit, and those benefits of work for the larger society. Work-readiness skills include the traditional basic skills of communication literacy and problem-solving, as well as the newer skills of environmental, technological, and occupational literacy. Work-readiness also includes personal attitudes and behaviors related to work and learning such as self-discipline and creativity, as well as the ability to effect and cope with change, to acquire and apply new knowledge, to be an active citizen in group and community activities, to understand work opportunities in a changing global economy, and to possess specific work skills.

APPENDIX B

Responsibilities for Improving Education for Work. Moving to an experience-based integrated curriculum that results in work-readiness learner outcomes will require coordinated action on the part of *all* stakeholders. The Task Force has identified primary and secondary responsibilities for this process in order to assure and encourage specific accountability for initiating the change efforts.

Recommendation

	Legislators and State Policymakers	State Board of Education	State Dept. of Education	Local School Districts	Educators	Post- Secondary Institutions	Business, Professions, and Labor	Students and Families
1. Review and Update Mission	■	★	□	■	□	□	□	□
2. Share Responsibility to Educate for Work	●	●	★	●	★	●	●	●
3. Define and Evaluate Learner Outcomes		★	■	★	□		□	□
4. Develop Integrated Experience-based Pre-K-12 Curriculum			□	★	■		□	□
5. Improve the Ability of Educators	■		□	■	★	■	□	
6. Change the Delivery of Education			★	★	■	■	□	□

Key: ■ Primary Responsibility
 ● Shared Responsibility
 □ Secondary Responsibility
 ★ Primary Responsibility to Initiate the Process.

APPENDIX C:

TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

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APPENDIX D

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